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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 004233

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y OF PARA (2)

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN  
OSD FOR BREZINSKI  
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2016

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/ASADABAD - EAST AFGHAN MILITIA FORCES HERE TO  
STAY?

REF: A) KABUL 1714 B) KABUL 2786 C) KABUL 2970 D)  
KABUL 4001

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Classified By: Acting Pol-Mil Counselor Marie Richards, for reasons 1.4  
b and d.

1. (C) Summary: Provincial and district officials in the eastern Afghan border provinces of Kunar and Nuristan see militia or auxiliary forces, in existence since last year, as essential security elements. Though they are untrained and unreliable, the 1000 men in Kunar and 200 in Nuristan guard the roads, allowing the police (at least theoretically) to chase criminals and assist US and Afghan military forces in the fight against the enemy. Kabul,s desire to appear sensitive to the needs of the provinces, local politics, and a recent tragedy all may work against any proposed "roll back" of these units. End summary.

Security situation in eastern Afghanistan  
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2. (C) Though southern Afghanistan continues to grab the headlines, the eastern border provinces of Kunar and Nuristan, sandwiched between Badakhshan in the north and Nangarhar (with the major city of Jalalabad) to the south, are far from stable. Kunar and Nuristan have long provided refuge to both homegrown insurgents and a handful of foreign fighters. Operation Mountain Lion (OML), conducted by Afghan National Army (ANA) and US-led Coalition Forces (CF) during April and early May 2006, temporarily dispersed Kunar,s Taliban (TB) and elements of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,s branch of Hezb-e Islami (HIG). Since then enemy forces have

been attempting to regroup. They continue to attack CF, ANA, Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Border Police (ABP), with mixed results. CF elements, as well as ANA forces, have recently pushed north from Kunar into neighboring Nuristan, still a safehaven for a number of groups including HIG and Lashkar-e Taiba (LET). Long-term objectives are: rooting the enemy out of Nuristan, blocking his infiltration routes from Pakistan, and destroying his historical bases there as well as in Kunar.

#### Shortage of Afghan police

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13. (C) Like many provinces in this country, Kunar and Nuristan lack adequate ANP forces. Kunar has only about 40 ANP patrolmen in each of its 14 districts, and about half that force guards the police headquarters in each district. The remaining 20 patrolmen police the rest of the district, which can range in size from approximately 100 sq km (Marawara) to over 300 sq km (Manogai/Pech). Nuristan has 40 or 50 men in each of its eight districts, but Nuristan's districts are larger and less densely populated. The two provinces, security problems are compounded by an undermanned ABP and, in the case of most parts of Nuristan, by the lack of any Afghan National Army (ANA) presence. ANP forces are poorly paid, lack heavy weapons to fight off the enemy, and are chronically short on ammunition, with each man carrying just 120 rounds for his AK-47. The police forces in Kunar and Nuristan are overstretched.

#### Kunar and Nuristan Militias established in late 2005

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14. (U) Last autumn, Kunar Governor Assadullah Wafa

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received permission from the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) in Kabul to hire one thousand "auxiliary" forces to beef up security in his province, at least temporarily. This now means that each district has on average sixty tribal militia members. Their mission in most cases is to guard road checkpoints, giving the ANP the freedom to conduct more patrols. Six to ten males man each post, responsible for monitoring up to two kilometers of road in Kunar. In addition, Governor Mohammad Tamim Nouristani got the green light in late 2005 to hire 200 "auxiliaries" for Nuristan, all of whom have been deployed to the two border districts. Sixty "auxiliaries" are in Barge Matal, the northeasternmost district, and the remaining 140 are stationed in the southeastern district of Kamdesh, a hotbed of enemy activity.

15. (U) District governors in some places, e.g. Sirkany and Narang (Kunar), work with tribal shuras (councils) to choose men from different tribes and villages to guard each checkpoint. In others, e.g. Watapur (Kunar), district chiefs have preferred to select "auxiliaries," frequently people related to each other, from the village(s) nearest to the post in question. Two tribal elders must vouch for each candidate, who is then vetted by the district ANP chief as well as the local branch of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan's intelligence service. The provincial governor, as the top MOI representative in the province, signs off and forwards the auxiliary's packet to the ministry for final approval. (Note: These salary payments are separate from those for regular ANP, and are not paid out of the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA). End note.)

16. (C) Pay for the "auxiliaries" is 4000 afghani

(\$80)/month, though disbursement of these funds in Kunar has regularly been one or two months behind schedule. The governor of Nuristan complains that his remote province still has received no salaries at all for the auxiliaries since the program's inception. Each auxiliary, who gets no training from the ANP or anyone else, must supply his own personal weapon, almost invariably an AK-47 rifle. Militia forces in Sirkany state they are responsible for providing their own ammo, though the Watapur district governor states he buys rounds for his auxiliaries on the local economy, sometimes on the black market.

¶17. (U) The thousand-man "auxiliary" force in Kunar and the 200 in Nuristan are not unified under the command of a single tribe or really under any one government official for that matter. Command and control relationships are ambiguous. Each checkpoint has a commander who answers to both the district governor and police chief.

Lack of uniform and communication leads to tragedy  
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¶18. (C) Coalition Forces (CF) find it difficult to tell the "auxiliaries" on the road from anti-coalition militias (ACM), with tragic results on one occasion recently. Neither the MOI nor the local government issues the militiamen official identification cards, but some districts have taken it upon themselves to provide them temporary (and easily forged) documents. The checkpoint personnel do not have uniforms, though in some locations they try to dress in a similar fashion. On 20 Jun 06, auxiliary and ANP forces, none

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in uniform, were speeding in an unmarked car along the main road in the unstable Pech River Valley to answer a distress call from an ANP squad. CF shot at the vehicle, believing the armed men to be enemy fighters with hostile intent, killing one ANP soldier and two militia members, as well as wounding a policeman and the civilian driver. To avoid another tragedy, GOA and CF have been consulting over ways to improve communication and coordination with the auxiliaries. Provincial officials are planning to supply them with uniforms and have submitted a request, through MoI, that CF provide basic police training to them as well.

Effectiveness of auxiliaries  
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¶19. (C) Gauging the effectiveness of these "auxiliary" forces is tough. On the one hand, most of these auxiliaries seem to contribute little to increasing real security along even the small patch of road over which they are responsible. They readily admit that they will go out on a "roving patrol" only when they get word that CF or ANA will be passing by. There are citizen complaints that the "auxiliaries" are corrupt. A number of IED incidents along the roads of Kunar have occurred within sight of auxiliary checkpoints, causing CF and GOA to question whether the militias have been co-opted by the enemy.

¶10. (C) On the other hand, the very presence of "auxiliaries" is an indication that the GOA is taking the security concerns of the provincial government seriously. District leaders in the two provinces say they believe that the militias, intimately familiar as they are with their areas and their inhabitants, can make vital contributions to security. CF commanders note that the militias working on the Pech River Valley road turn in an average of two IEDs per week. Nearby villagers repelled an enemy attack on a checkpoint in southwestern Kunar, coming to the aid of

their "boys" in the auxiliaries, something they might not have done if that position had been manned by CF or out-of-district ANP personnel.

Comment

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¶13. (C) PRT Comment: It will be difficult to "roll back" the auxiliaries, at least in Kunar. District leaders want to protect this institution for political reasons. Funding of the auxiliaries is also an easy way for Kabul to defend itself against charges that it is not paying attention to the security requests of provincial governors. Kunar has been waiting for the go ahead from MOI to hire fifty more auxiliaries for each of the most restive districts. In Nuristan, the governor and Coalition Forces are hoping the MOI will avoid this growing headache by simply converting the 200 auxiliaries in the east into regular ANP troops. Critics of the militias can only hope that that goes through, and that Kunar will follow suit. Either way, militia members might not provide much in the way of actual security protection, but they at least symbolize a projection (however minimalist) of the MOI,s, and thereby the GOA,s, reach into Kunar and Nuristan. And in the mean time, to avoid a repeat of the 20 June tragedy in Watapur, the GOA will try to train and better equip the auxiliaries, giving them greater legitimacy as well as making them an even more entrenched element of security in eastern Afghanistan.

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¶14. (C) Embassy Comment: As noted ref d, action is being taken on the national level to regularize "auxiliaries" like those in Nuristan and Kunar by putting them under the full command and control of the MoI, issuing them uniforms and ID cards, offering some training, and eventually (it is hoped) folding them into the ANP. The focus right now is on the south rather than the northeast due to the need to direct energies to the areas where the insurgents are most active. Thus, it may take some time to bring the elements described by PRT Asadabad under full MoI control. In the meantime, the auxiliaries may at least provide a token degree of GOA power projection, to be followed up later with a more regular formulation and eventually by a fully trained national police force.  
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